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AUTHOR D'Andrea, Michael
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ABSTRACT

This article outlines three different counseling approaches which counselors typically use to promote clients' career development. These include the trait-factor, client-centered, and the developmental approaches to career counseling. The trait-factor approach is described as having the overall goal to help clients accurately assess their own skills and interests in order that they might choose a compatible occupation or career. The client-centered approach is described as emphasizing the importance of dealing with clients' personal problems and concerns as they are viewed as the major obstacles to making meaningful and satisfying career choices. The developmental approach is described as one in which counselors usually provide both career guidance and personal counseling services in their work with clients depending on their developmental needs. It is noted that each model places a different level of emphasis on the amount of time and energy practitioners are encouraged to provide for career guidance versus personal counseling services with clients. The paper discusses Hawaii's Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program, which integrated aspects of all three of these model's in such a way as to effectively promote the personal and career development of poor women living in Hawaii. The components of the program and the women it served are described. (ABL)

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When and Why Do Counselors Use Personal and Career Counseling: An Integrative Model

by

Michael D'Andrea

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Dr. D'Andrea is an assistant professor in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Hawaii.

Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to:

Dr. Michael D'Andrea
Department of Counselor Education
1776 University Avenue
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
(808) 956-7904

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of three different approaches counselors frequently use in assisting clients to realize their career potential. A model that integrates aspects of all three approaches is also discussed

When and Why Do Counselors Use

Personal and Career Counseling: An Integrative Model

Counselors are frequently called upon to assist clients in making career choices. Fundamentally, this requires practitioners to act as a resource in order that individuals may experience a sense of support and guidance as they explore various issues related to their career interests. In this regard, career exploration involves seeking information about one's self and the environment in ways that facilitate occupational choice, job entry, and work adjustment (Savickas, 1989).

Counselors use different approaches in helping clients make informed decisions regarding their career choices. For instance, some practitioners prefer using a structured approach when providing career counseling services to their clients. In doing so, they primarily discuss issues related to occupational trends, job entry abilities, and clients' career competencies. These counselors may be described as being career counseling "purists" as they direct most of their attention to dealing with occupational issues and avoid complicating the process by minimizing the amount of time spent doing personal counseling with the persons with whom they work.

In contrast, other practitioners stress the importance of supporting in-depth exploration of clients' personal concerns in helping to promote their career development. This counseling orientation places a premium on providing

personal counseling services in assisting persons to overcome various emotional barriers that impede their ability to make effective and satisfying career choices.

Clearly, the degree to which counselors provide career or personal counseling depends on numerous factors. This includes the practitioner's theoretical orientation to career counseling, the needs of the clients being served, and the overall purpose of the intervention. With these factors in mind, the following section of the article describes three different counseling approaches that are frequently used to promote individuals' career development. Each approach stresses varying levels of personal and career counseling when working with clients. The author also includes a discussion of an intervention, which incorporates both career and personal counseling techniques, that was used to stimulate the career development of a group of low-income women living in Hawaii.

The Trait-Factor Approach

The trait-factor approach to career counseling emerges from the work of Parsons (1909) and Williamson (1972). Counselors using this approach tend to focus on matching clients with a career choice that best fits their abilities, interests, and attitudes. This orientation to counseling is fundamentally based on the notion that individuals and occupations differ along measurable and relatively stable dimensions (Lynch & Maki, 1981). Thus, the overall goal of counseling from this perspective is to help clients

accurately assess their own skills and interests in order that they might choose a compatible occupation or career.

Because assessment is the core of this approach, counselors rely heavily on the results of vocational interest inventories, aptitude tests, and ability tests which they administer to clients in the course of their work with them. Typically, counselors using this approach are active and directive. They may also be noted to willingly accept the role of a "teacher" as they use counseling sessions to teach clients various problem-solving skills that are useful in making career-related choices. In summary, career counselors, who use a trait-factor approach in their work, direct much attention towards increasing clients' skill level and decision-making abilities by using a variety of educational and assessment services. The main objective of these efforts is to assist clients to make career choices that complement their own work attitudes, interests, and skills (Lynch & Maki, 1981).

Counselors, who use a trait-factor approach, are less inclined to provide personal counseling services which focus on clients' emotional concerns and difficulties. In this context, "emotional difficulties are not emphasized but viewed as the result of the lack of information and the inability to make effective decisions" (Lynch & Maki, 1981; p. 63). Thus, while it is agreeably a useful counseling strategy with persons who are motivated and generally free from emotional distress, the trait-factor approach is likely

to be less effective when interacting with clients who demonstrate a lower level of motivation and/or manifest personal difficulties which impede their career development. In working with these clients, it may be more useful to implement a client-centered counseling approach where the personal concerns and emotional needs of the client become the center of attention.

The Client-Centered Approach

Nevo (1990) accurately noted that individuals, who seek the services of a career counselor, often do so because they are "anxious and confused, suffer from low self-esteem, and are insecure about their identity" (p.321). It is agreed that persons experiencing personal distress in their lives may benefit from discussing various occupations with counselors and learning more about their own skills and interests as a result of undergoing a career assessment. However, the client-centered approach to career counseling emphasizes the importance of dealing with clients' personal problems and concerns as they are viewed as the major obstacles to making meaningful and satisfying career choices.

Patterson (1982) makes an interesting distinction between counseling services that emphasize information sharing about career issues versus those that stress the importance of exploring clients' personal concerns, problems and anxieties. In this regard, he refers to the process of gathering and sharing specific information about occupation

trends and vocational issues with persons who are not experiencing personal problems "career guidance." However, Patterson (1982) uses the term "career counseling" to more specifically describe efforts aimed at helping clients, who are experiencing various personal difficulties, come to grips with their problems in order that they might make effective career choices.

Like Patterson (1982), Wrenn (1988) argues that counselors cannot (and should not) separate clients' personal problems from their career problems. From this perspective, career counselors are urged to focus on clients' inner-lives by helping them explore their emotional concerns and fears in a non-threatening, supportive environment.

In doing so, counselors are encouraged to use a "client-centered approach" as they assist in the exploration of both personal and career issues by following clients' leads and responding to their emotional needs. Thus, by providing personal counseling services, client-centered advocates note that individuals often manifest a more accurate self-understanding and an increased level of self-respect. These advancements, in turn, allow clients to make more effective and satisfying career decisions (Freeman, 1990).

In contrast to the trait-factor approach, client-centered career counselors are less directive and more interested in using personal counseling as a means to help

clients' realize their career potential. Although client-centered counselors are likely to use career tests and inventories as a means to enhance the process of personal counseling, they usually do not use them to the extent that counselors who aspire to the trait factor approach would.

The Developmental Approach

The developmental approach to career counseling is reflected in the work of Donald Super (1957) who has written extensively in the area of career development. Super's (1957) approach to career counseling represents an integration of self-concept theory and developmental psychology. Similar to other developmental theorists, he describes career development as an on-going process that can be described in a set of stages. They are referred to as the Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Stages.

Each developmental stage is marked by a unique set of career tasks and characteristics which persons normally experience at different points across the life span. Bradley (1988) points out that the manner in which individuals deal with these career development tasks greatly influences the way they think and feel about themselves.

Counselors using this approach usually provide both career guidance and personal counseling services in their work with clients depending upon their developmental needs. For example, counselors are likely to use a variety of career tests and design various learning activities when

operating proactively with their clients. In doing so, individuals are encouraged to think about and discuss potential career options that match their particular skills and interests.

However, when working with persons experiencing noticeable emotional difficulties which clearly impede their occupational decision-making abilities, developmental counselors are noted to make an intentional shift in their counseling style. Instead of using career counseling techniques associated with the trait-factor approach, they redirect their efforts towards providing clients with a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere in which they are encouraged to explore and overcome their intrapsychic concerns. Using various personal counseling techniques to facilitate this process, the developmentally-minded counselor works to help individuals overcome the types of negative and self-defeating thoughts and feelings these clients typically express about themselves and their career options.

The counselor's job is certainly made easier when the needs of the persons with whom one works are best served by providing career guidance or personal counseling services. In contrast, it is usually more difficult and challenging to work with persons whose diverse interests and needs requires that counselors be able to effectively shift from providing career counseling services to offering personal counseling when the occasion arises. With this in mind, the author

describes a community-based intervention which integrates both career guidance and personal counseling services within the context of an adult career motivational training project.

The Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills Program

The State of Hawaii's Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program is a federal- and state-funded project designed to assist persons receiving public assistance to achieve financial independence by promoting their career development. This program consists of a wide range of educational, training, counseling, and support services which participants may use over an extended period of time in order to enter a satisfying and financially rewarding career. The initial component of the JOBS Program consists of a motivational training group which all participants are required to attend.

The career motivational training groups were held once a week from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. in which individuals who received governmental subsidies (i.e., Aid to Families with Dependent Children - AFDC) either volunteered or were required to attend. These group meetings were designed to help the participants become familiar with the JOBS Program as well as provide clients an opportunity to express any personal concerns they might have about participating in the project.

The majority of the persons taking part in this project were female heads-of-households who received governmental

subsidies in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The personal and career histories of these women reflected that they experienced numerous problems associated with being poor, undereducated and lacking basic occupational skills and knowledge. In general, these women either not been employed in the past several years or had never secured a full-time employment position in their lives. Thus, from a developmental perspective, they were noted to exhibit many of the needs and characteristics associated with Super's (1957) Exploration and Establishment Stages of career development.

The motivational training groups typically accommodated between 6-15 persons. Houser, D'Andrea, and Daniels (1992) designed the format of these motivational training groups in such as way as to intentionally provide clients with both career guidance and personal counseling services. This dual service delivery approach was established because the program planners recognized that, while information related to the clients' career needs certainly warranted attention, they respected the importance of dealing with the personal side of the participants by taking time to counsel them about their anxieties, fears, and frustrations. What follows is a brief discussion of the specific types of activities used by the group leaders in working with these women.

First, a number of group activities were designed to expand clients' awareness of the JOBS Program. This

included discussing the various types of services the clients' were eligible for as participants' in the JOBS Program, clarifying ways in which these services might be useful in terms of making effective and satisfying career choices, and increasing their understanding of ways in which their own "work attitudes" might be matched with specific types of occupations and careers.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the group leaders opened the morning session with an "ice breaker" activity in which the participants were encouraged to write their names in the center of a 5" X 10" card and list four adjectives around their names that described positive characteristics about themselves. As a result of taking turns stating their names and explaining the adjectives, the group members gained a sense of familiarity with one another in a positive and respectful atmosphere.

Next, the counselors had the group members view an educational audio-visual presentation of the JOBS Program. Besides providing much information about the types of career development services the clients were entitled as participants in the program, the film was entertaining in that it included a number of popular local personalities who explained the structure of the program and the clients' rights and responsibilities in detail.

After reviewing the film, clients were asked to complete the Work Attitudes Inventory (Houser, Smith, & Konstam, 1990) and the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman

& Lazarus, 1988). These pencil and paper, self-scoring instruments were used to assist clients gain greater insight into their own attitudes towards work as well as providing the chance to talk about the types of occupations which might best match their attitude scores. Also, the results of the Ways of Coping Questionnaire provided the opportunity to have the participants' examine the various coping strategies that they were likely to use when confronted with various life stresses.

Given the high levels of stress that characterized the lives of these women, the group leaders acknowledged that it would be irresponsible (and perhaps even unethical) not to provide opportunities for them to explore their personal concerns, fears, uncertainties, and frustrations during the career motivational training group. Thus, in building upon the discussion of the clients' coping strategies, the facilitators presented a "Guided Imagery" exercise in which the participants were encouraged to think about various achievements and strengths they have experienced in their lives. They were also encouraged to begin to consider new goals that would enhance their own sense of personal and career well-being.

In order to facilitate this self-evaluative and goal-setting process, the participants were instructed to close their eyes while they listened to calming music and asked to follow a series of relaxing exercises (Houser, D'Andrea, & Daniels, 1991). As they moved into a more relaxed mindset,

the women were encouraged to think about a couple of their own personal achievements, strengths, and to consider what sort of new goals they might set for themselves. After "guiding" them through this exercise, the group facilitators instructed the participants to note two achievements, strengths, and goals they thought about during the "Guided Imagery" exercise on a separate piece of paper.

Having done this, the clients were instructed to list possible barriers to attaining these goals in their own lives. It was at this point in the motivational training group that the counselors consistently noted a shift in the tone and content of the group discussions. In this regard, the clients were observed to bring up numerous personal problems they were experiencing that impeded their career development. These personal barriers included being "stuck" in a physically abusive relationship in which many of the women reported feeling that they could not do things which were not approved of by their husbands or boyfriends, feeling very anxious about leaving their young children alone while they participated in job training activities, describing their own dependence on alcohol and/or drugs, and expressing feeling generally ashamed of their status a "welfare recipient" to name a few.

Presented with these sort of problems, the counselors intentionally shifted from a career guidance orientation to a more personal counseling modality. A primary objective in making this sort of shift was to help the group members feel

comfortable in talking about these sort of personal issues. In doing so, the facilitators noted how willing the other participants were to attend to the personal concerns of the other members in the group. By using numerous client-centered counseling techniques, such as communicating empathic understanding, extending a genuine sense of concern and support, and avoiding making judgmental statements in response to the personal concerns expressed by these women, the participants frequently reported feeling better about themselves, appreciating the supportive comments made by other persons, and more interested in continuing in the JOBS Program.

Without making the shift from a career guidance emphasis to a more personal counseling orientation, all of the group leaders indicated that they would have lessened the participants' interest to continue in the JOBS Program and lower their overall motivation to pursue new career goals in the future. In fact, recent research of the effectiveness of these intervention model revealed that the group participants reported a significant increase in their level of career self-efficacy as a result of taking part in the motivational training group (Houser, D'Andrea, & Daniels, 1992).

In conclusion, this article outlines three different counseling approaches which counselors typically use to promote clients' career development. These include the trait-factor, client-centered, and the developmental

approaches to career counseling. Each model places a different level of emphasis on the amount of time and energy practitioners are encouraged to provide career guidance versus personal counseling services with clients. Finally, the author discusses a project which integrated aspects of all three of these models in such a way as to effectively promote the personal and career development of poor women living in Hawaii.

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